

BRITISH PUGS

By Brig. E. C. L. SIMSON*

(Concluded from page 10)

30. *E. indigata* Hübn. Considering the prevalence of *Pinus sylvestris* and *P. abies* this pug is by no means easily obtained. My small series was made at my study window, which looks out onto a grove of pines. Unfortunately, only males appear, in the engaging way pugs have of lying flattened on the window pane. The branches of the trees are far too high for me to reach and so I leave the collecting of *indigata* larvae to my local Coal Tits (*Parus ater*).

31. *E. distinctaria* H.-S. In the marvellous summer of 1976 one male member of this species came to a light in my garden in N. W. Hampshire on the 14th of July. Previously only twice recorded from the vice-county, and that twenty-five years before, its presence was a complete enigma. I can only say that in that wonderful year many things turned up in my garden, never previously seen there by me. None as rare as *distinctaria*, but it showed that there were more than normal moth movements going on. I have searched, with care, the massive thyme banks on the West Coast of Scotland, and in Mull and Skye, without seeing any sign of this very local little moth.

32. *E. inturbata* Hübn. Seldom does one see so many assorted larvae as when beating the branches of well grown Maples (*A. campestre*) in mid-May. Every now and then a little green larva, with purple patches on its back, shows up. It stands, looking like a minute croquet-hoop, and so you have *inturbata*. The moth will use quite isolated trees, provided they are well-grown and flowering.

Satisfactorily, the imago emerge only six weeks after pupating and so one's bred series is rapidly attained. As in most pugs, bred specimens are far darker than the illustrations in South show or, indeed, the descriptions in Meyrick, who says of *inturbata*: "Forewings pale greyish-ochreous". In reality they are a warm, dark brown. I think both South and Meyrick often based their descriptions on either worn or long-kept, faded specimens, as far as the pugs went.

33. *E. pusillata* Fabr. I once, in Hampshire, went into a plantation of spruce (*Pinus abies*) looking for *Thera variata*. The trees were only about 15ft high and had not been thinned. The date was 25th May and at once moths exploded in all directions. They made for the clear ground outside the darkness of the plantation and because the trees were so thickly planted, and due to the massive barrier of dead branches, I had no hope of catching any. So I made my way out and was

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hoping to pick up a few specimens, which might have settled, when two urchins appeared. In the uninhibited way of such, one asked, "Wot yer doin' Mister?" I asked, in return, if they were interested in money. They were. And so, for a suitable reward, they scuttled about the plantation like terriers, while I stood in the sunshine netting *E. pusillata* and *T. variata*. Both species were in great quantities (the late Dr. de Worms would have said "in spate"), and I was able to select a good series of both species, indistinguishable from bred specimens.

One final note. In the vernacular, *pusillata* is called "The Dwarf Pug". Not a good name; there are five pugs on the British list very much more dwarfish.

34. *E. abbreviata* Steph. One of the earliest pugs and, as in my part of the world many specimens are spectacularly melanistic, very welcome on a chill April night.

35. *E. dodoneata* Guenée Another early season pug, which I find most plentiful amongst old, well-grown hedge Hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna.*). From these the handsome orange and black larvae can readily be beaten; 7th July being a good date. This is an attractively marked pug, made more attractive by breeding.

36. *E. exigua* Hübn. A very common pug, turning up at the M.V. light in all sorts of situations. 25th May is a good date for procuring newly emerged specimens, which are readily identifiable.

37. *E. irriguata* Hübn. In late April or early May, if the M.V light is placed under one of the massive oaks of the New Forest, this pretty little pug will come fluttering down as if it had been watching all your preparations with interest. In a good year a dozen perfect specimens can be seen in the first hour after dark. If specimens are required for ova, then 5th May is a good date.

38. *E. insigniata* Hübn. I have only one specimen of this fine pug. I have beaten the Hawthorns near where friends have taken this moth; I have put my light where advised by friends. In short, I have done my best. This, obviously, is not good enough, and, in the words of the schoolmaster, I must try harder. That I will.

39. *E. fraxinata* Crewe I am in some doubt about nomenclature here. Goater (*Ibid*) writes: "The evidence for the specific distinction of *E. innotata* (Hufn.) and *fraxinata* is reviewed by G. Haggatt (1963, *Ent. Gaz.*, 14: 13), who concludes that all British records of *innotata* (Hufn.) are referable to *fraxinata* or to error".

The series in my collection, shown under this heading, was bred from larvae kindly sent me by a Past-President of B.E.N.H.S, G. Prior. They were F2 larvae from larvae originally taken in September 1977 in the Romney Marsh, Sussex, feeding on Sea-Buckthorn (*H. rhamnoides*) Being somewhat short of this pabulum in my parish, I fed them Ash (*F. excelsior*), for which they showed a great liking. The relevant

dates are: Larvae received 11.7.78; pupation 21-27/7; imago emerged at intervals between 28.8. – 20.12.78. The imagines are large and very dark and the angulated striae look like those of either of South's illustrations of *innotata* or *fraxinata*.

Mr. Prior is of the opinion that the Romney Marsh larvae may be referable to *innotata* for reasons of dates; of generations; and of food-plant. I can only re-state my gratitude to Mr. Prior, and place my bred series before the experts.

40. *E. sobrinata* Hübn. Wherever Juniperus grows in plenty, from the South Coast to the Highlands, there will this somewhat variable pug be found. Catching the imago is a sport for two people; one to beat a juniper bush and the other to stand down wind, where he can often score a right and left as the moths dash out. 21st July is a good date for perfect specimens.

41. *E. helveticaria* Boisd. Another juniper feeder. I took a ♂ and ♀ in the Isle of Skye one summer, and have beaten juniper in the Highlands in late July for the larvae. I only found *juniperata* larvae and wonder if, as Meyrick says, the moth is out April/May what happens to ova laid in April until, as he says, the larvae can be found July to October. I have a feeling the moth is probably continuously brooded during the summer.

42. *E. nanata* Hübn. A very prevalent species, with a second brood, flying in July, consisting of very small individuals. These, presumably, are the parents of the fine progeny to be seen next May.

43. *E. extensaria* Freyer. I set aside two days to getting the larvae of this very local moth. In effect, I needed only twenty minutes! I motored to the North Norfolk coast, through a village and down a track to the saltings. I stopped at the high tide mark and stepped out onto the fragrant marsh. The date was 15th September. At once I saw a big clump of Sea Wormwood (*A. maritima*) waving silvery in the wind. There I saw ten *extensaria* larvae of varying sizes and took a few of the largest. On to the next clump and one more and I had eighteen larvae.

I was surprised how big they were. Picking a bundle of the pabulum I left the Wash and returned home; thankful that I had planted a bush of Lad's Love in my garden. In the event the lasting qualities of Sea Wormwood proved so great that the bush was not used and all the larvae pupated amongst the original pabulum. I had eighteen pupae and, between 12 – 25th May the following year, eighteen perfect imagos emerged. No parasitism and no casualties. How I wish this were the usual outcome of breeding pugs. It is a handsome moth and well worth all the trouble.

44. *E. subnotata* Hübn. A pug which should be bred. To do this go to the sea-side and, where *Atriplex* grows on a bank, search for the larvae as follows. Very gently lift up the trailing stems of *Atriplex* and, equally gently, pass a

beating-tray along the ground under the stems. Now shake the stems vigorously. If the date is 24th September then a dozen or so *subnotata* larvae will soon be collected. The reason for this method is two-fold. First, the larvae pass the day deeply hidden in the mass of *Atriplex*; secondly, they fall to the ground at the least disturbance and are then hard to find among the debris. Much parasitised. Of seventeen pupae formed in the autumn of 1979 five *subnotata* emerged, together with eleven chalcid parasites. A 69% loss through parasitism.

45. *E. subumbrata* Guenée. On downland, especially, the larvae can be obtained in fair numbers by sweeping *Scabiosa*, *Centaurea* and *Gentiana* in late August. Other pug larvae will be found in the sweeper, but *subumbrata* is readily separated by being long, slender and without diamonds or Y markings on the back.

46. *C. sparsaria* Hübn. I include this species because it is called a "pug" in the vernacular. In the Test Valley I have found eggs and larvae on the underside of the leaves of *Lysimachia vulgaris* growing amongst reeds and close to trees. The larvae are usually very heavily parasitised. Date for small larvae (best) 23 – 27th August.

Now I come to four species of pugs not recorded by Meyrick.

47. *E. arceuthata* Freyer. Variouslly known as the Cypress Pug or Freyer's Pug, this species has undoubtedly spread since the early 1940's, helped by the popularity of the *Macrocarpa* as an ornamental tree in gardens etc. It is now a common species throughout most of the Southern Counties.

48. *E. phoeniceata* Rambur. A recent arrival in Britain, first found at Penzance by de Worms and Messenger in 1959. It slowly spread eastward and was first found in Hampshire, at Southsea, on 23.9.65 by Langmaid. The pabulum is also *C. macrocarpa*; the larvae being confined to mature trees. Best date 20th November.

I took my first specimen at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight; but since then have seen many more through the kindness of R. R. Pickering of Bognor Regis, West Sussex. Mr. Pickering finds that one or two emerge in July and gradually build up to a peak about 16th August. After this, numbers slowly decline; but the moth can still be seen in late Septmeber. A long season!

49. *E. egeneria* H.-S. Only discovered as a British species in 1962, when specimens were recorded by Mere in the Wye Valley, where its pabulum is the flowers of the Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*). G. M. Haggett, writing in Vol. I p. 106 of *Proc. Trans. Br. Ent. Nat. Hist. Soc.* (what a mouthful!) suggests that the limes were encouraged by the monks of Tintern in order to provide flowers for their bees over an extended season. Would it not be a possibility that the monks also brought *T. cordata* from France and planted saplings

round the Abbey? In the earth enclosing the roots of these saplings etc. the pupae of *egeneria* might also be transported to the Wye Valley. If this is true then the moth remained undiscovered in Britain for six centuries.

On 4th June, a few years back, I put my M.V beneath a tall *cordata* at Tintern and, conditions being ideal, freshly emerged *egeneria* appeared in numbers upon my sheet. I was thus able to select a small series of the moth in "as bred" condition. A very drab species; even "as bred". To Haggett it most closely resembles a pale *lariciata*; to me it seems more closely to resemble, especially in size and shape, a pale, poorly marked *E. millefoliata*.

50. *C. chloerata* Mab. Why it was that the Victorians, who beat everything in sight, including their children, failed to beat the larva of this pug from sloe (*Prunus*) I do not understand. The larva is very distinctive, being remarkably procryptic amongst the sloe-bloom on which it feeds. It is white, except for its head and segments 1-3, which are pink. Thus it is very difficult to see, with its head buried in the pink centre of a sloe flower and its body laid along the white petals.

This was the strange larva so admirably beaten from flowering Blackthorn on 16th April 1971 by E. C. Pelham-Clinton. In fact, he found two larvae and bred the moths. The moths are easily distinguished from *E. rectangulata* by the following: (a) *Chloerata* has a less notched line bordering the outer edge of the forewings' central band. (b) The central black line on the under side of the hind wing in *chloerata* is much less acutely angled.

As soon as the news got round, collectors started examining their series of *rectangulata* and many found they possessed *chloerata*; some even claiming to have bred it. As the larva is quite easily distinguished from that of *rectangulata* I wonder why they did not begin to suspect a stranger in their midst long before 1971! One thing, however, explains a lot: this moth is a reluctant visitor to the moth-trap, on which so many collections seem solely to rely.

Told by Denzil Ffennell to beat the topmost boughs of old sloe bushes on the Downs, I obtained larvae, in North Hampshire, on 24.4.75 and bred a nice series in late May following.

This concludes the account of pugs in my collection. But there is one fine pug, *E. abietaria* (Goeze) (= *pini* (Retzius)) of great rarity, which I have little hope of obtaining, about the recent capture of which in Hampshire I must relate. But some day luck may come my way. And here I quote the admirable Allan (*A Moth Hunter's Gossip*): "I don't mean the ordinary good luck which Dame Fortune metes out to us all at times, but the extraordinary luck of which one hears now and then - such as walking aside to a grassy hillock for lunch and finding two Mazarine Blues *in cop* upon it".

Now how about this for luck? A friend, who lives in my part of Hampshire, went, with a companion, in the autumn

of 1979 looking for the larvae of a Micro which feeds in Spruce (*P. abies*) cones. They visited five places in Hampshire where well-grown spruces grow, and collected cones from each place. The sacks of cones were carefully inspected for signs of micro-larva and, showing none, they were eventually emptied in a pile in a corner of my friend's garden. One cone must have contained a healthy larvae of *E. pini* which, as is its wont, left the cone and pupated in the ground. In mid-June 1980 the imago emerged, dried its wings and eagerly awaited the coming of dusk. But at dusk my friend lit his moth trap which, being only twelve yards from the pile of cones, proved a fatal attraction to our *abietaria* which took its first, and last, flight into the trap. So at 8 o'clock next morning my friend saw the first *pini* to be seen alive in Hampshire for at least twenty-five years. Not surprisingly, it was immaculate.

My friend is now faced with the task of collecting spruce cones annually from five different places, and keeping them entirely separate until he obtains, if ever, another *abietaria*. Thus it may be proved that there is, after all, at least one small colony of *abietaria* left in Hampshire.

FURTHER RECORDS OF THE DOTTED RUSTIC: *RHYACIA SIMULANS* (HUFNAGEL) (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE). — A short note by R. E. Scott in *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* (1979) 91: 260 noted the first record of *Rhyacia simulans* for the old county of Huntingdon (V.C. 31). This year I have taken, or had notice of, a further 18 specimens.

The first was a female, partly damaged (presumably by a passing vehicle), picked up from a road in St. Ives on July 9th. On July 16th four specimens were found under half-empty black plastic sack of compost in a greenhouse at Monks Wood Experimental Station. Three were males, but the other escaped before its sex could be determined. I saw another specimen fluttering in a minibus used regularly for journeys between Monks Wood and St. Ives as I was driving it through Huntingdon on July 25th, but it escaped through a half open window. Mr. John Heath took two specimens in a light trap in his garden in St. Ives on the night of July 25th-26th. Another specimen came to light at a Rothamsted trap in Monks Wood National Nature Reserve in late August.

On August th Mr. E. John collected up the remains, mostly wings, of a variety of moths at the roost of a long-eared bat at his home in Bluntisham, near St. Ives. Among them were the wings of eight *Rhyacia simulans*. Thereafter he made daily collections of moth wings from the roost and on August 18th another pair of *R. simulans* wings was collected. — J. N. GREATOREX-DAVIES, The Institute of terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambs.